

The CEA CRITIC

Formerly THE NEWS LETTER of the College English Association

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April, 1948

Middle Atlantic Group Meeting

Nearly eighty people from fifteen colleges attended the Spring Meeting of the Middle Atlantic Group held at Goucher College, Baltimore, on April seventeenth. In the illness of Dr. Havens, Professor Elizabeth Nitchie presided.

Speakers at the morning session were Louis Teeter of George Washington University and Ford K. Brown of St. John's College, both of whom stirred up considerable controversy by their papers on the general subject of Teaching English to the Non-Specialist. Mr. Teeter considered the varied role of scholarship in the art of teaching, while Mr. Brown explained very persuasively the methods of teaching in a college which has no majors at all. Discussions were led by L. Giovannini of Catholic University and F. D. Cooley of the University of Maryland.

Karl Shapiro, at present conducting a creative writing course at Johns Hopkins, gave an illuminating and provocative account of his teaching credo and methods at the afternoon session.

After the Treasurer had reported comparative solvency, the following officers for the 1948-49 year were elected:

Pres. Thomas F. Marshall, Western Maryland College.

Vice-Pres. Guy A. Cardwell, Univ. of Maryland.

Sect.-Treas. Calvin Linton, George Washington Univ.

A buffet luncheon was tendered members by President and Mrs. David A. Robertson of Goucher.

No date was set for the next meeting.

S. E. PENNA. CEA

A meeting of the newly formed Southeastern Pennsylvania C. E. A. will be held at Pennsylvania Military College, Chester, Pa., on Saturday, October 30, 1948. The general topic will be "English in General Education." Details of the arrangements and the speakers will be announced in a later issue of C.E.A. Critic, and preliminary announcements are being sent to colleges in the area included in a line drawn from Philadelphia to Stroudsburg, to Carlisle, to Wilmington, Delaware, and to Philadelphia.

Learn By Looking?

Sectional meetings of the C. E. A., as well as other educational organizations, have been devoting a good deal of attention to the preparation which entering college students should have. I have attended one such meeting and read published accounts of others. Most of them appear to me to be rich in wishful thinking and poor in well directed action toward improving conditions. One educational conference in the state of Washington even adopted the suggestion that the colleges simply follow the lead of the high schools by taking students as they find them and doing the best they can under the circumstances. Such an idea seems to indicate a willingness to let a poor condition go on getting worse.

Having spent some years in public school administration before entering college work, I believe that something can be done to improve the preparation of our entering students if we direct our efforts toward the right centers of authority and if we make clear the fact that what we want will do more than make life easier for the college freshman and his instructors.

Let us begin in our own province. Very few college departments provide any special work in either composition or literature for would-be teachers of high-school English. It is entirely too easy for a student to accumulate enough hours to win certification without developing a better-than-average familiarity with the material he will be expected to teach. Certification requirements can be met by decidedly mediocre work in almost any combination of the great variety of offerings under the general heading of English. College departments of English should not be content to leave certification requirements in the hands of non-specialists.

Our strongest efforts should be directed at the administrative officers of our secondary schools, who, I believe, are largely responsible for the poor work done by high-school English teachers. There are several reasons why this is so. For one, administrators and supervisors are specialists, not in "subject matter," which they have been taught to distrust, but in educational theory and practice.

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A Program For Composition

(Continued from the March Critic)

There is nothing in the nature of the subject matter of the composition course which inhibits its research. There is, of course, a very great deal in the labor of a composition course which inhibits it. No man can teach five sections of composition and do anything else. The question is not whether he can do research, but whether he can muster enough energy to stagger home to bed. The maximum teaching load for teachers of composition should be three sections of not more than twenty-five students, and the average load should be two sections of not more than twenty-five students. Variation by way of assignment to other courses should be a matter of regular policy. This variation is easy in a well developed program of required courses and with a staff possessing a variety of competencies; it is very difficult in the traditional, hierarchical program and with a staff constrained by its limited talents to compete for a narrow range of courses in English literature.

Apart from the physical labor, other difficulties are supposed to beset the teacher of writing. It has been assumed that teaching composition is one thing; research is another; and that the two are incompatible. The theory is that composition courses do not feed research, but inhibit it. Research is assumed to be inseparable from the possession of a field, or period, of literary history, staked out in the catalogue, and never challenged by discreet colleagues.

Something must be said, of course, in favor of the enfeoffment of literary study. There is a particular mellowness and richness in the presentation of seventeenth-century poetry, for example, by a man who has taught it many times over, who regards it as his private and special trust. Often the product of this kind of pedagogical specialization does not take the form of published scholarship at all, but it may be scholarship just the same, in a very worthy sense; and it gives depth to the work of an entire college. On the other hand, there are results which are by no means desirable. Carried to final de-

(Continued on Page 5)

SIX TRADITIONS

"What, specifically, do you mean by the *traditions* to be found in *British* books? Suppose the values implicit in one book are different from those in another? . . . Does a common tradition emerge from the study of the great texts?"

These, reports Professor Ryan in the November NEWS LETTER, were some of the probing questions stimulated by Mr. Theodore Spencer's talk on General Education in the Humanities at the meeting of the New England Section of the College English Association.

They suggest that the "great text" idea—however admirable as a movement from snippets toward whole works and from mediocrity toward greatness—does not in itself answer all of the questions which have plagued the teacher of literature. He cannot completely hide his own intellectual and spiritual confusion by retreating into a great text because there is another great text which unfortunately does not altogether agree in its core of thought with the first. And apart from some vague and shifting concept such as the "dignity of man," no common tradition clearly emerges.

That difficulty is of course not new; but the very greatness of the great text—the range and depth of the treatment of values—makes it more acute. Our texts seem to be pushing us toward assuming the role of prophet and philosopher of everything under the sun, a role for which many of us are poorly prepared.

We hesitate to assume that role, yet we do not like to treat a great book trivially. My way of squirming out of this dilemma is to create a situation in which the student is given a fair chance to do much of the hardest thinking for himself. In two courses, World Literature and American Literature, I am selecting and presenting major works within a framework of six traditions designed to encourage the student to contrast, discriminate, weigh, reject, accept. I am asking the student, from the first to the last moment of the program, to search in his reading, not for a hazy sweetness and light, but for the specific personal and social values in which he finds real

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THE CEA CRITIC

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ENGLISH, LTD.

Composition can't be taught. A teacher may help interested students who want to practice, by providing a forum. That's all. Herding coerced and unwilling freshmen into sections and assigning them instructors produces only the familiar and more or less dismal results described by Professor Sixbey in the March CRITIC. (Is any college happy about its required composition, by the way?)

Suppose the requirement abolished. Suppose students only "taking composition" because they want to. What an improved opportunity for the teacher. And what a stimulus for better teaching. How severe, really, would the drop in registration be?

Actually, throughout the country and in individual colleges, hasn't required composition grown too monstrous to staff and administer? Its current size only emphasizes its long recognized weaknesses, and the end of growth is not yet.

For the English instructor, suppose a quicker and easier passage across the Morass of Composition. Suppose a lighter load. Suppose, even, fewer teachers and quicker promotion. It all need not be an idle dream.

And if the bogey of possible illiterate graduates should rise in the dream, 'tis but a memory of our present waking hours.

WINDOW DRESSING

"My first complaint is that the average graduates are not sufficiently well trained in the use of the English language. I see no advantage in training observers and investigators if they cannot accurately record their observations and intelligently describe their investigations. English is the engineer's window dressing! It is the medium through which he sells his wares; and the fluency and accuracy in his writing are largely a measure of his success." (A "typical excerpt from representatives of the mineral industry over the nation", from *A Plan for the Future of Montana School of Mines*, submitted to the President, 1946).

Who are members of the C. E. A. to question this judgment? But before we accept the burden and honor of teaching Engineers to dress their windows, let us reflect. A man speaks as he thinks, and he thinks as he understands. What price understanding — of Metallurgy, Mining, or Milton?

English I—(cont.)

The dignitaries who indite, not prose compositions, but educational reports and programs, ought sometime to have to face the teachers of composition and rhetoric and explain, if they can, just why the difficult art of writing should be allocated — and generally restricted — to the tenderest, most mawkish part of a college student's career. The presidents, the deans, the senior professors, when and if they indulge in writing, commonly limit themselves to their chosen fields of special interest. But the "freshman English" course demands that a green student be ready at any moment to declare himself on almost any conceivable aspect of human experience, and to do so not only correctly, but also reasonably, gracefully, impressively. No other course in the curriculum asks as much. No other course requires that a student perform at all times as a complete person, employing all his faculties at once, in an extraordinarily delicate kind of coordination, upon a single task. To dandle a test tube in a laboratory is by contrast a simple undertaking. In the laboratory, success depends upon the degree to which the test-tube dandler can stop being a complete person and become only a part of a person —

a scientist. But the act of writing evokes and needs the whole person, and the teacher who presides over the act must deal with that whole person.

Out of this fact arises the deep concern of the composition teacher, and from it, too, come his rightful ardors and triumphs as well as his sad but charitable awareness of the persistence of human imperfection. It is a strange kind of privilege, this teaching young persons to write who have very little as yet to write about; but it is very much worth while, anyhow, to encounter them as persons and not to have to see in them potential doctors, economists, bureaucrats, atomic fissionists.

DONALD DAVIDSON
Vanderbilt University
(from "To The Warders of the Gate")

T. J. B. Walsh, College Editor of Scribner's, suggested that part of Prof. Davidson's preface to *American Composition* and *Rhetoric* might merit quoting, in connection with "What Goes On In English I" by Prof. Sixbey in the March CRITIC.—Adv.

RELAX

I wish to take issue with some 90 per cent. of the material in the CEA Critic, past, present and future. Not that I don't appreciate the long hours of serious thinking that have gone into the articles; as a student, I enjoy being worried about—even though I look upon such worrings with amusement.

Please, please stop re-arranging the curriculum. Please stop devising ways to catch my attention. Please stop trying to make me the full man single-handed.

Your misconception lies in the fact that you take it upon yourselves to do the job of education that the entire college faculty is responsible for. The department of English does not have priority over wisdom injections. History, philosophy, psychology and economics are perfectly valid branches of learning. Yours is not the whole job — relax.

If you say that the English major rarely gets into other departments, you may be right and certainly the student is wrong. Instead of attempting to fill the void yourselves, limit the number of courses that the major may take in his own department. If this suggestion has the effect of cutting down the number of English teachers, I am not entirely aghast. There may be too many of you anyway.

Your job, as I see it, (and

what trepidation can I have now) is not "to make a book living experience" to quote Paul Landis, but, in so far as the no English major is concerned, develop taste and the ability write clearly. I know too many people who accept Chaucer and Shakespeare as living realities but whose taste in contemporary literature extends no further than mediocre historical novels. I also know people who have read Proust knowingly and who write just as turgidly. The result of ignoring or disparaging the importance of taste is muddled thinking derived from muddled books, magazines, and newspapers. The results of ignoring the virtue of clear writing are those very muddled books, magazines and newspapers.

The English major should be exposed to the same treatment and more. The 'more' is not the sloppy and eternal 'survey course' but a well-integrated and stiff course in a particular period. Brooklyn College's classes in American Studies and 19th Century English Studies are good examples. Let me quote the catalogue for a rather ambitious explanation of the aims of the English Studies class.

"This course aims through extensive and thorough reading to familiarize the student with the changing patterns of English life and thought from the close of the Napoleonic War to the first World War. The emphasis will be on the development of the liberal movement, on the opposition to it, and on its subsequent modification. Consideration will be given both to historical aspects—economic, political, religious, educational, etc.—and to their literary expression — biography, essay, novel, poetry."

There should be little worry about the survival-quotient after that course. And if the sources of Shakespeare's plays are forgotten — please, please don't worry about it.

RUTH LIMMER
Upper Senior, Brooklyn College
(Ruth Limmer is the Editor's valued assistant. Members who do not receive their copies are reminded that she has charge of the mailing list! She delivered this treasonable attack unprovoked and uninspired.—Ed.)

17th Century News Letter

The Seventeenth Century News Letter has been revived with Vol. VI, No. 1. It's a lively sheet, and promises to appear in March, May, October, and December. Subscription \$1.00 a year; editor, Arthur M. Coon Sampson College, Sampson, N. Y.

Letter From A Harvard Junior To His Father

Of course, I keep wondering why and with what I've been occupied. You read and read and then write a little and find analogies and comparisons and consistencies and contradictions. And you find out what all the great men said about things and just where they were wrong and illogical and inconsistent and you see the bleak problems and fears so eloquently expressed by T. S. Eliot in his great poem *The Wasteland*, and you see all the fads and you reject them all and you go and study some more. And you hear the guys across the hall playing the radio and you wonder how they ever get any work done, and what they do with all their time, and you hear guys in the dining room telling with joy how drunk their roommates were last night, and you wonder why, and your friends plan a party and figure out who is going to take Jane to the dance Saturday. And it's a beautiful day on the river bank and you give up and go outside and watch the crew row in their shells on the river, and you waste two whole hours, when you should have read two books of the Bible so that when you're finished you can read the poems of Edwin Arlington Robinson in the Anthology and then get down to work on the *Republic* and you ask why you wasted all that time but you wanted to and it was such a beautiful day and you wish you could go into the country and just sit and look and smell sometime but you never have time because there's only two weeks left to reading period and you should go and see the Joneses but you have to work Saturday afternoon and there's a rehearsal every night this week and there is a play and a lecture and a concert all tonight which you want to go to but you don't have time and you have to pick your courses next year and they all conflict and there are eight you want to take but you can only take four and why don't those bastards next door turn down the radio. But mostly you wonder why and what about it and what is worthwhile and spending your time is so complicated. And you look ahead and strain ahead and ask yourself what is going to be most important to me because studying can't be everything and there are a thousand things I can be doing all the time but

there is not time to do any of them. Because the studying is the most satisfying at the moment and you feel you have done your duty and you feel pleased with yourself and feel you are getting someplace when you do it.

But you want to do the other things but when you do you get behind in the studying and have to study harder to catch up. But the studying is endless and the more you study the more you have to study and the more you study the more it narrows down and you forget that there are other people in the world and you forget that there are other people in the college and you forget there are other people in the room and you study and it makes you think of books you should read and books you want to read and there are more of them all the time and there is not enough time for any of them and you must do them now because when you graduate from college you must work and then there won't be time to do it all so you must do it now but you can't even do it all and does that mean you should not try. No. Because you want to do it all but there is not time. But is it the thing that is worth doing, you wonder? What is worth doing and what will be important to me. I can't believe that this will be of any use, but I don't see anything else better, so I'd better keep on doing this. But there is so little time and so much to do and it would all be great fun and it all is great fun and you do what satisfies you and what you think will be the best but you know you don't want to teach and ideas are no good, especially the ideas of others and finding the inconsistencies and the comparisons and the dichotomies and the significances and the hidden meanings and the symbolisms and the movements and the climates of opinion and the *milieux* and the frames of reference and the influences. And you don't want to study what anybody else is studying, and you don't know what to do nor what you want to do nor what you ought to do nor what is best to do nor what is even good to do and everybody tells you something different. And meantime you study and rehearse and sing and criticize. So I've been pretty busy.

The editor would welcome more frank comments from thoughtful students about the work which is assigned them.

LEARN —

(Continued from Page 1)

One educational theory dear to the hearts of such people is that a good lesson calls for a high degree of pupil participation, but for some reason they cannot see as much pupil participation in a group of individual students, each writing down his own thoughts, as they can in a "project" which calls for each student to go off and exercise his already best developed skill in accordance with a master plan, worked out by the teacher, which will result in a grand exhibition that can be shown at a teachers' convention or written up, with pictures, in a professional magazine. I realize that most students will learn, and learn well, something by constructing settings and dressing dolls in styles typical of the society represented in a work of literature, but I am quite sure that this something will not be how to write English.

Another preoccupation of administrators is progress. Educators simply must not be found behind the times. New equipment must be bought as rapidly as funds will permit, and, once bought, the equipment must be used. English often appears to be a good place to use audio-visual equipment, despite the fact that the theory of learning by doing, to which educators are devoted, would suggest that the best way to learn reading and writing skills is not likely to be looking and listening.

The theory of learning by doing is applied at considerable expense in all sorts of laboratory courses, but its application in English has usually taken the form of workbooks which enable the student to get practice in doing the work of a proof-reader. If students were really to be given practice in the use of language tools, as they are in the use of shop tools, English classes would have to be about the same size as shop classes and have as much time allotted to them. Administrators are willing to maintain a low pupil-teacher ratio in shop courses because shop equipment is expensive and a large capital outlay would be required to increase the size of classes. In English, as in certain other courses, an increase in the pupil-teacher ratio will cut rather than increase expenses; hence English teachers are often overloaded without making the school's over-all ratio appear too high.

As an administrator I have had a teacher of vocational home economics ask me how I expected her to get any teaching done in a double-period class of twenty-four students.

Many high-school English teachers would feel lonesome at first in classes like these, but after a while they could get some good work done.

English teachers, like teachers of the so-called practical arts, can get favorable teaching conditions when their superiors and the public can be brought to realize that English has a practical value, that high-school graduates should be able to use the language as efficiently as the shop-trained student uses the tools in the shop.

MINOR W. MAJOR

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FROM THE MAIL

I wanted a copy of the article ("Outside Comments On The Ph. D.") because Mr. Werner wrote it. More important, however, I was interested in the article because of the suggestions it contains for revising the Ph.D. Although I do not think the figures Mr. Werner quotes necessarily indicate that "our method of training does not prepare graduates to compete for jobs off the campus" and that it does not make our students "socially and economically desirable," nevertheless I agree with him that requirements for the Ph.D. in English are in need of extensive revision. However much his article may have irked some people, I think Mr. Werner's suggestions and comments deserve consideration.

LOIS HARTLEY
Urbana, Illinois

In the presence of witnesses, a member said recently, "I judge publications by how late they are. Trash seems to come out early, and mediocre stuff on time. But what I really want to read is always late." May he live long and prosper.

I'VE BEEN READING

Members are invited to contribute reviews of books, old or new, which they wish to call to the attention of other English teachers. Professor J. Gordon Eaker, the Assistant Editor, is in charge of I'VE BEEN READING. He is Head, Department of English, Jersey City Junior College, Jersey City, N. J.

Comments on reviews will be welcomed.

Shakespeare's Essays

CEA readers may be interested in the resemblance between Edward Taylor's "Upon What Base?" and Blake's "The Tyger." Some of their students may be interested in investigating the probable influence of George Herbert upon Taylor (and, by the way, upon Emily Dickinson as well). There is, of course, no possible influence of Taylor upon Blake, Taylor's poems (in manuscript) not having been discovered until 1937.

Incidentally, I note with regret your review of George Coffin Taylor's **Essays of Shakespeare** (The CEA Critic, X, 2, Feb., 1948). A reading of the "essay" on Honor, for example, is alone enough to expose the book for what it is: an inexcusable arrangement of passages twisted out of their dramatic context; and if Professor Taylor

has been teaching Shakespeare from the point of view of his book, he has been guilty of mis-teaching Shakespeare for a good many years. Certainly your reviewer has exhibited a curious misconception of the nature of the playwright's art, and particularly of the relations between speech-content and character and between character and situation. I do not question Shakespeare's greatness as thinker—I am no Shavian—but I do question Professor Taylor's method of revealing this greatness.

T. C. HOEPFNER
Alabama Polytechnic Institute

A History of Modern Drama
edited by Barret H. Clark and George Freedley. New York, D. Appleton-Century Company.

In the preface to this book, the editors declare that "Our subject is drama, not acting, not direction, production, or lighting"; but they seem to forget that a perusal of the stage directions of any modern play will convince any reader that these are an integral part of the play as conceived by the dramatist. Moreover, while it would be impossible and useless to give an account of how every play was acted, one cannot speak of the characteristics common to the drama of a particular period without considering the style of acting prevalent, the kind of production expected, and the dramaturgy utilized to meet their demands. To disregard a considerable portion of what is a cooperative product is to speak of drama as though it were written for the reader only; and this is the attitude taken in too large a part of the book. For some unknown reason Russia is singled out as an exception to such limitations, and as a result nearly the same amount of space is given to the drama of that country as is assigned to all that was produced in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Germany. Yet there are those who feel that Ibsen, Bjornson, Strindberg, Hauptmann produced work that was greater and certainly more influential.

The difficulty is that there are some twenty-five contributors to the book; and, as the editors say, every writer "has his own critical standards and has of necessity made use of them." Thus there are no common criteria in terms of which judgment is passed and by which the "general reader" can be guided. Professor Dana writes interestingly; but were the "general reader" to depend upon him, he would believe that the only important drama of

modern times was written by Russians. Such drama of Soviet Russia as has been translated is pretty poor stuff, the sort of thing that was perpetrated in early Victorian England; yet it is given three times as much space as is given Irish drama, or Spanish drama, and nearly as much as is given that of England. Apparently Shaw and Yeats and Synge and O'Casey and Benevente are considered relatively unimportant.

When does the period that is called modern begin? To Mr. Citron, writing of Hebrew and Yiddish drama, it seems to begin in the middle of the sixteenth century, and to Professor Dana in the early seventeenth. Of course it may be said that they are simply setting forth the background from which the drama sprang, and discussing the work of the forerunners; but why does Mr. Citron need ten pages to discuss the unimportant work that precedes that of Goldfadden whom he calls the founder of the Yiddish theatre, and why does Mr. Dana require eleven pages to reach Gogol, twenty-four to reach Turgenev, and twenty-seven to reach Tolstoy, whose **Power of Darkness** is generally considered to be the beginning of modern drama in Russia, when Professor Rhodes needs only four pages to discuss the far richer and more significant two centuries of French drama? Why was it unnecessary to discuss the work of Talma, Rachel, Bernhardt, Duse, Macready, Vestris, Robertson, Kean, or Irving, who had great international significance, and yet imperative to discuss the work of a host of Yiddish and Russian actors who had none?

From what has been said it is evident that the chapters are of unequal value. Professor Gustafson writes an effective exposition of Scandinavian drama, and Henry Schnitzler presents the drama of Austria in such fashion that the reader not only knows what plays were written and by whom, but appreciates what kind of plays they are and how they differ from what went before. Mr. Clark is informative on the drama of The United States though not all will accept his criteria of significance; but best of all, probably, is the chapter on French drama by Professor Rhodes. In this last, one does learn, not only that there is a change in the material of modern drama and in the method of handling it, but also in the major premises in terms of which the action unfolds. In a word, we see it as the expression of a differ-

ent school of art. It is the absence of such exposition from many of the chapters that is the greatest weakness of the bookish and makes us feel that it might more correctly be styled a chronicle of plays, or as Mr. Clark says in his chapter, "a record of plays written and produced in modern times". Such a record has been needed, and as such the book has value; but it will disappoint those who want a history of modern drama.

JOSEPH L. TYNAN
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almost, if not quite, as inaccessible as before. Compartmentalized scholarship is not the only kind, and not always the best kind. There is need for scholarly work issuing from a different attitude and habit of mind. In either event one must master and control detailed, copious, factual information; but breadth is not antithetical to depth. Perhaps we have been working in too narrow a frame. Perhaps some of us should renew our contact with the material of discipline outside our own, and seek points of reference in a philosophy of man.

Creative work, including research, from a fresh intellectual base, by men who find their referents in live and thoughtful teaching, is sadly needed. The germ of our present failure was admitted long ago when the professors of literature qualified their fundamental commitment to teach and addressed themselves to one another. The humanities cannot live for long on the prestige of dead giants. The study of literature can wither away even in the custody of learned and well-meaning men. It is now withering away. For more reasons than the "economic reasons" we so complacently accept, the talented students of our colleges turn to the sciences, even the social sciences, and turn their backs on the learning we are enjoined to preserve and enlarge. (1) They judge us on the basis of the fare we offer as freshmen and sophomores, and they believe we have nothing of value. They turn away because the sample is poor. As a result, the graduate students now engaged in the study of humane subjects are radically inferior in native endowment to their contemporaries in nearly every other major field of study.

Good students can see that academic literary study has become a *cul de sac*. Teachers labor to get teachers. Modern literature, good and bad, is quite independent of the learned doctors. The two things, literature and the study of literature, are separate. The one leads away from the other. The power to speak to men, and move them, has nothing to do with the humanities.

I do not mean that we should popularize ourselves. We are stale enough without becoming common. But we should discover vigor to impose a degree of influence on our audience. We should be near enough the vital forces of life and thought to expect a hearing. We should beware lest our traits single us out for pension rather than for trust. We have our colleagues

in the classical languages for warning.

IV

This is the program for composition that I wish to propose. It is identical with the program that I would propose for all undergraduates, or, if you prefer, elementary college teaching of humane subjects. I urge, first, a return to teaching as the moral foundation of our existence. Unless our first law is to teach, we will continue our long process of withdrawal, and disappear altogether. Second, I urge that the power to promote good teaching in the elementary courses rest in the hands of those who have immediate reasons for wishing the job well done. Third, I urge that the elementary courses be designed to inform and strengthen the entire structure of the college and to escape entrapment in any narrower cause. And last, I hope that by imparting a new vigor and dignity to the arts of thought and expression, some assistance may be given good men everywhere who labor to revitalize the power of literature in the world.

HENRY W. SAMS
University of Chicago

(1) See below a supporting comment from the editor's mail.

Less Than One in Five

The difficulty of providing broadly educated and critically sensitive teachers of literature in the human materials graduate schools have to work with. In looking back at my twenty-three years as a graduate teacher, I conclude regretfully that the best quality of young Americans must not have gone in for English teaching. Less than one out of five candidates for the Doctorate in my special field has succeeded in winning the degree. Of those with the degree not all have shown independent taste and intellectual initiative. I can count on the fingers of one hand the men I have taught whom I could conscientiously recommend to be teachers of other teachers of English. The demand for teachers grotesquely exceeds the supply of those who have taste and broad culture. The veterans of the late war are the best graduate students I have met with; but will they be succeeded by men with such wide travel, varied knowledge of modern languages and general maturity?

Name withheld by request

(Part of a letter commenting on a recent editorial, "Sewing Circle?")

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SIX TRADITIONS—

(Continued from Page 1)
sustenance at this time. And necessarily he reports to me and the class the result of his search.

As for the more-or-less conflicting traditions, they are Christian Orthodoxy, humanism, romanticism, humanitarianism, naturalism, and tech-mammonism. With the exception of the last, each is familiar to all students of thought in and out of literature; hence brief notes will be enough to establish their meaning and their usefulness.

Christian Orthodoxy is the gospel of salvation in the risen Christ as formulated in the creeds of the Roman Church and of the more conservative of the Protestant sects. Whatever one's personal faith or doubt may be, Orthodoxy remains as one of the great facts and forces of Western Culture, a fact and a force to be understood and weighed. Though it has steadily entered literary study in the writings of Dante, Herbert, Milton, Pascal, Bunyan, Newman, Eliot, not to mention the Bible, the specifically religious content has usually been subordinated to the study of form and artistry. Dante and Milton, we tend to say, were great poets who with scarcely pardonable eccentricity chose Christian themes. I am proposing that the emphasis return to what was the writer's chief interest—religious thought and feeling.

Let humanism, as a second tradition, be any reading of man's nature and destiny which the reader wishes so to denominate, for short definition is impossible. We would all agree, I believe, that much of the wisdom of "classical" authors—Greek, Roman, and modern—is humanistic in its tendency and that this tradition has usually competed with Christian Orthodoxy. Adopting it for the framework involves only the preference for this term as against classicism when the concern is value rather than tone and form, and the willingness to use it for a writer of any period to whom it happens to apply regardless of the terminology which appears in conventional literary studies.

Romanticism, for all of its vagueness, is a third lay religion—a way of thinking, feeling, living which conflicts to a degree with both humanism and orthodoxy. Used with discrimination between its varied components, it will serve well enough as another tradition. And it goes without saying that we shall be ready to recognize

the romantic strain whenever and wherever it happens to appear.

Literary naturalism derives its view of nature and of man from one or more of the sciences. As a tradition within a framework stressing thought content, this term must be reserved for writers like Zola and Dreiser, who accepted the philosophical materialisms of their day; it should not be applied to the realist who goes beyond Howells merely by using "coarse" language or spotlighting areas of living conventionalism avoided. Consider Faulkner—he is certainly a "tough" writer; but his core of thought, whatever it may be, is certainly not any variety of philosophical materialism.

I find the concept **humanitarianism** useful for pulling together all of the aspirations toward bettering the economic, social, and political conditions of man's life on this earth which are at the center of the tract or novel or drama of social protest, criticism, or Utopian vision. It is sufficiently distinguishable from the other traditions at least in emphasis. The humanitarian may or may not accept Christian Orthodoxy; he may or may not value the humanist's devotion to perfecting the individual spirit; he may or may not appreciate the values of romanticism and naturalism; but he most certainly does believe that Jerusalem must be built here and now and for all men.

Up to this point, the so-called traditions are chiefly the counters of standard literary history and criticism, modified slightly to emphasize their value as labels for centers of thought and feeling and presented with stress upon conflict rather than agreement.

The sixth tradition, tech-mammonism, though not original, is a newer conception. It is the recognition that, in this country at least, the average student and the average citizen are daily activated by some loose fusion of the ideals, techniques, attitudes of science, technology, industry, and business. Perhaps the myth is centered in Progress or Production or even Henry Ford; perhaps in time of war, cold or hot, the label is Democracy. Whatever it may be in its full complexity, tech-mammonism seems to me the most powerful dynamic factor in American life. And though the worshipers of Tech-mammon pay homage to the other traditions, even to the Christian God, their real loyalty is always sufficiently clear.

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satirize tech-mammonism; but for the positive and uncritical formulation, the materials are sub-literary—"good-will" advertising by great corporations or the "institute" of this or that; the speeches of "captains of industry"; editorials, articles, stories in magazines and newspapers. The materials are all around us but awkward to use. Certainly, they do not deserve extended notice when we are dealing with authentically great texts; but, perhaps as a phase of an introduction to our real subject, they can be brought in for scrutiny and appraisal. Certainly, they are needed if the student is to become aware of his own convictions, his own deep and often unconscious loyalties, and of the conflicts between those loyalties.

* * *

Is this framework of six more-or-less conflicting traditions designed to impede the study of a great text in its unique and complex wholeness? Is the student being encouraged to announce that John Milton was both a humanist and a Christian in the belief that in this formula he has said all that needs be said about PARADISE LOST? Do the traditions prevent anyone from approaching a poem or novel or drama as a work of art?

An emphatic no is the answer to each of these questions. A fanatic for schematization could put the framework to these ruinous uses, but a fanatic can ruin any approach to literature.

The scheme does, I have found, supplement and strengthen the "great text" conception. It supplies criteria for the selection of texts and tends to correct one's natural bias toward that "greatness" to which he is temperamentally most responsive. It recognizes the cogency of our initial questions by abandoning all commitment to a single tradition and by facilitating the contrasting and weighing of values. It relieves the teacher of the impossible role of prophet and philosopher even while it invites the student to seize for himself the greatness which is in great books. And, curiously, students seem to think that it has increased their interest in the study of literature.

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